

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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-----091212 240043Z /73

O R 231610Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7547
INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY CARACAS

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAGUA 3924

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, PINT, NU
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR TALKS WITH SOMOZA: 22 AUGUST 1978

REF: A) MANAGUA 3913, B) MANAGUA 3921

1. AT 7:00 P.M. LOCAL TIME, THE AMBASSADOR CALLED SOMOZA TO EXPRESS CONCERN OVER SITUATION AND EXTEND HIS SYMPATHY FOR THE PLIGHT OF HOSTAGES. SOMOZA ASKED AMBASSADOR TO VISIT HIM AT 9:00 P.M. THAT NIGHT.

2. IN THE COURSE OF A TWENTY MINUTE CONVERSION, SOMOZA INFORMED THE AMBASSADOR THAT THE BISHOPS HAD REPORTED TO HIM THAT TEN PERSONS WERE DEAD AND REFERRED TO THE DEMANDS MADE BY THE FSLN (REFTEL A). SOMOZA SAID HE HAD BEEN CONTEMPLATING MILITARY ACTION, BUT HAD DECIDED TO NEGOTIATE BECAUSE "LIVES CANNOT BE REGAINED, BUT MONEY IS ULTIMATELY NEGOTIABLE." AMBASSADOR AGREED AND EXPRESSED HIS HOPE
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THAT THE CHURCH MEDIATION WOULD SUCCEED.

3. SOMOZA THEN INFORMED AMBASSADOR THAT TWO WEEKS PREVIOUSLY, HE HAD FLOWN TO VENEZUELA AND SPOKEN WITH PRESIDENT PEREZ. PEREZ HAD TOLD SOMOZA THAT PRESIDENT CARTER KNEW OF THE TRIP, BUT THE AMBASSADOR RESPONDED THAT THE EMBASSY HAD NOT BEEN INFORMED OF THIS. SOMOZA REPORTED THAT HE AND

PEREZ HAD SPOKEN FOR SEVERAL HOURS. PEREZ HAD PROPOSED THAT SOMOZA RESIGN IN FAVOR OF A GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNITY IN RETURN FOR WHICH SOMOZA WOULD BE GUARANTEED HIS LIFE AND PROPERTY. SOMOZA TOLD THE AMBASSADOR THAT, ONCE HE LEFT POWER, NO ONE COULD GUARANTEE HIM ANYTHING.

4. SOMOZA REFERRED TO SABORIO-LA PRENSA DEMANDS (REFTEL B-PROTECT NAMES). CLEARLY, HE SAID, THE OPPOSITION WAS TRYING A NEW ROUTE AS PRESIDENT PEREZ HAD NOT PERSUADED HIM. THE AMBASSADOR NOTED THE REASONABLENESS OF THE SABORIO-LA PRENSA DEMANDS. AMBASSADOR ADVISED SOMOZA THAT HE THOUGHT THE BEST THING WOULD BE TO NEGOTIATE AND SEEK A COMPROMISE. SOMOZA AGREED, SAYING THAT HE HAD ALREADY SERVED ONE TERM AS PRESIDENT AND HAD NO FURTHER AMBITION. HE HAD BEEN INSISTING, HE SAID, ON REMAINING UNTIL 1981 BECAUSE NICARAGUA NEEDS AN "ORDERLY PROCESS OF TRANSITION." HE THOUGHT THE NATIONAL GUARD COULD BE PERSUADED TO PERMIT FREE ELECTIONS, BUT HE WAS WORRIED ABOUT ABRUPT CHANGE.

5. AMBASSADOR STRESSED THE NECESSITY FOR COMPROMISE. SOMOZA ASSURED THE AMBASSADOR TO MISINTERPRET HIS CRITICISM OF THE BISHOP'S INITIATIVE (THE SACERDOTAL COUNCIL MESSAGE) AS A SIGN OF INFLEXIBILITY. SOMOZA THEN SHOWED THE AMBASSADOR THE FSLN "WAR COMMUNIQUE" AND TOLD THE AMBASSADOR THAT "EVERYONE" INCLUDING PROMINENT OPPOSITION BUSINESSMEN, WAS CRITICIZED IN THE DOCUMENT. HE SAID
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THAT "THE FSLN WOULD ONLY BE HAPPY IF A COMMUNIST REVOLUTION OCCURRED." SOMOZA ADDED THAT HE HAD SPOKEN TO THE PAPAL NUNCIO ABOUT A CONSERVATIVE PARTY INITIATIVE TO GET PARLIAMENTS OF DIFFERENT COUNTRIES TO CONDEMN THE ATTACK AND HE HOPED THAT THE USG WOULD ALSO CONDEMN THESE "CRIMINAL ATTACKS." SOMOZA STATED THAT THE PANAMANIAN GOVERNMENT HAD ALREADY ACCEPTED TO RECEIVE THE REVOLUTIONARIES.

6. COMMENT: THE AMBASSADOR FOUND SOMOZA TO BE VERY DISTRAUGHT AND TIRED. NEVER BEFORE HAS SOMOZA BEEN CLOSER TO SUGGESTING THAT HE IS SERIOUSLY THINKING ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF RETIREMENT.
SOLAUN

NOTE BY OC/T: UPGRADED TO EXDIS PER STATE 214625.

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